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Iran-Iraq Conflict

Iraq is now ready to cease fire if Iran "clearly, unequivocally, and officially" agrees to hold direct negotiations with Iraq "directly after the cease-fire," Iraqi President Saddam Husayn announced in a message broadcast by Baghdad radio 6 August. The direct talks will focus on all clauses of Security Council Resolution 598 except the cease-fire, starting with the withdrawal of forces to international borders, he said. If Iran accepts the Iraqi initiative, Iraq will agree to the deployment of UN forces between the Iraqi and Iranian Armies until a lasting and comprehensive peace is reached and the two sides can resume "normal life." It is "natural" to say Iraq will be able to use the Shatt al-'Arab and Gulf waterways "immediately" after the cease-fire, Saddam Husayn added.

The Iraqi leader said this change in position followed consultations with other Arab states as well as a series of meetings by the Iraqi RCC and Ba'th Party Command. He also linked the decision with Iraq's concern to maintain the support of "unbiased world public opinion" and to ensure that nobody should think that "vanity or viciousness" had entered into Iraq's policy after its "great victory" over Iran. The Iranian delegation at the United Nations stated that the withdrawal of the Iraqi precondition will allow the UN secretary general to immediately begin to implement Resolution 598 and announce a cease-fire, Tehran radio reported. The Iranian statement confirmed Iran's willingness "to accept direct talks within the framework of Resolution 598 and the secretary general's implementation plan." The secretary general has disclosed his intention to announce a cease-fire date by 9 August, the radio noted.

Among Arab reaction to Saddam Husayn's announcement, Jordan's King Husayn welcomed it as a "positive and constructive initiative," INA noted. A Kuwaiti minister read a cabinet statement "commending" Iraq's "honorable initiative," according to KUNA. PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir 'Arafat made a statement to INA saying Saddam has reaffirmed Iraq's "honest intention" to reach lasting peace. On the battlefronts, an Iraqi military communique broadcast 5 August by Baghdad radio mentioned continued fighting in the I, IV, and V Corps sectors. Iraq dropped chemical bombs 4-5 August on Kurdish villages in Lulan region, IRNA contended. Iraqi aircraft violated Iranian airspace in two separate incidents 5-6 August, according to Tehran radio and IRNA. A 6 August Iraqi military communique claimed the Iraqi Navy sank two Iranian boats in a clash near the Al-'Amiq port, Baghdad radio reported.

King Husayn sent a letter to the Jordanian Armed Forces commander hailing Iraq's "brotherly gift" of "new arms and equipment" captured by the Iraqi Army, Amman radio disclosed. A recent Kuwaiti press report indicated that the arms gift included 90 Chieftain tanks.

Iran: Airbus Issue

Airport officials have called off the search for the black box from the Iranian Airbus downed in the Gulf because of a "virtual discontinuation" of signals, IRNA reported. The U.S. Defense Department report which concluded that "human error" caused the incident is merely the latest move by the United States in its "desperate search for a scapegoat," IRNA contended.

Jordan

"Sovereignty" over the West Bank has been transferred to the PLO and the Palestinian people, and Jordan will "immediately recognize a Palestinian Government once it is created," King Husayn stated in a 7 August news conference reported by Amman television. He stressed that Jordan has "no intention" of closing the bridges across the Jordan River and confirmed that West Bank residents can retain their Jordanian passports until an independent Palestinian state is created and Palestinian passports are issued. The king denied "incorrect" statistics propagated by "certain circles" in Israel which indicate that Palestinians constitute a majority of the population in Jordan, stating that Jordanians of Palestinian origin constitute "less than 40 percent" of citizens in the kingdom. Figures of the numbers of West Bank employees laid off as a result of Jordan's recent measures have also been "exaggerated" in accordance with "the same method of distortion," the king said.

Husayn had earlier issued decrees confirming the dissolution of the higher committee for occupied West Bank affairs and accepting the resignation "for health reasons" of Labor and Social Development Minister Rashid 'Urayqat, Amman radio reported. 'Urayqat was replaced by Marwan Dudin as labor minister and Fawwaz Tuqan as minister of social development. A new minister of supply was also appointed. The ministry of occupied territories affairs, which was formerly held by Dudin, was abolished by a cabinet draft law and its work taken over by a newly created Palestinian affairs department linked with the Foreign Ministry, Amman television indicated. Dudin told the JORDAN TIMES that this limited cabinet reshuffle is "not the final measure" which the government will adopt in connection with its disengagement from the West Bank.

Israel

Comment on Palestinian Document—A Palestinian plan for an independent state within the frontiers specified in the 1947 UN partition plan was described by Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir as an "insane" and "abortive"

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Iran-Iraq Conflict

A UN spokesman announced that former Swiss President Kurt Furgler will succeed UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar as mediator in the Geneva peace talks, INA reported. Furgler will take over from Perez de Cuellar after the first round of negotiations, INA added.

Iranian reports did not name Furgler as Perez de Cuellar's replacement but cited a UN spokesman as saying the replacement would be a "political heavyweight enjoying international credibility" with an "impartial reputation," according to IRNA.

Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati arrived late for the second meeting 26 August for reasons "not immediately known," IRNA noted.

Discussions in the first meeting centered on previous agreements between the two sides and accorded "special priority" to establishing a timetable for troop withdrawal to international borders, Tehran radio disclosed.

The sides are meeting at a triangular shaped negotiating table, with the Iraqis on the right, the Iranians on the left, and the UN team at the base, IRNA and INA noted.

The UN secretary general said the talks were "good" and the sides are "working seriously," INA reported. After a 2-hour joint session, the delegations retired to separate rooms to continue "mutual consultations" with UN negotiators, IRNA and INA reported. A UN spokesman said the "temporary halt" should not be "interpreted as a negative sign," IRNA added.

Prior to the first round of talks, Perez de Cuellar met separately with Iraqi Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz and Velayati, INA and IRNA reported. The talks with Velayati went over their scheduled time because of "obstacles created by 'Aziz" during his meeting, IRNA contended.

Majlis Speaker 'Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani called the recent border problems with Iraq "foolish" and said such "acts of disruption" would continue if Iraq feels Iran has become "complacent," according to Tehran radio.

Prime Minister Mir Hoseyn Musavi said Iran seeks "links with the world" but based on Islamic "values and principles" which include continuing support for Islamic "liberating movements" and fighting the "arrogance" of "blasphemous and Godless systems," the radio reported.

A representative of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front told UN observers it could not "ensure their safety" in Kurdistan and announced their determination to continue the "war against Baghdad," Radio Monte Carlo disclosed.

Lebanon

Israeli helicopters fired six air-to-surface rockets at the 'Ayn al-Hulwah camp and Israeli gunboats attacked that camp and the Al-Miyah wa Miyah camp, according to "security force sources" cited by Voice of Lebanon radio. A PFLP-GC and a Fatah-the Central Command position were destroyed in the raid, the clandestine Radio Free Lebanon disclosed.

Three Palestinians were wounded, Voice of Lebanon radio added. Israeli convoys were observed to advance toward Mazra'at al-Hamra' and have surrounded Yuhmur, Beirut radio reported.

Chamber of Deputies Speaker Husayn al-Husayni said the current "stalemate" over the presidential election is "very delicate and even dangerous," Voice of Lebanon radio indicated.

Interior Minister 'Abdallah Rasi accused the United States of "direct intervention" in the election, according to KUNA. Rasi said a "ranking American diplomat" had telephoned several deputies asking them to boycott the electoral session.

He accused Israel of "indirect involvement" in "sabotaging" the elections through the "rightwing Lebanese Forces." Rasi urged Washington and Damascus to "reach an understanding" on the elections and said a "brave and determined" president is required to settle the conflict by "dissolving" the "militia forces plaguing the country."

Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Junblatt met in Damascus with a Syrian party official to discuss the "obstruction" of the electoral process, Damascus radio reported.

The sides "condemned" the United States for its "impudent interference" in the election, the clandestine Voice of the Mountain radio disclosed. An "Arab diplomatic source" said Syrian sources "leaked" reports of a "conflict" with the United States over the election to "shore up its position in the Arab arena," the clandestine Radio Free Lebanon reported.

Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad met the head of Lebanon's "Islamic Group" to discuss the situation in Lebanon, Damascus radio noted.

Israel

Air Force planes fired seven missiles in an attack on a camp south of Sidon in Lebanon that is "used as a launching base for terrorist attacks," Jerusalem radio announced.

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